



# Anchorage School District

## Education Center

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February 13, 2023

Academic Policy Committee  
Family Partnership Charter School

Dear APC Chairman Goldade and Members of the Family Partnership APC:

### I. INTRODUCTION

This is to notify the Academic Policy Committee (APC) of the Family Partnership Charter School (Family Partnership) that the Anchorage School District (ASD) has instituted an investigation into the APC's conduct described below. ASD is gravely concerned with the APC's unprofessional infighting, non-compliance with the charter, and violations of state law, municipal law, and ASD School Board policies and administrative regulations. These issues are adversely impacting the school environment, staff, and student academic outcomes. ASD is considering all available options to address the APC's governance, ranging from probation to immediate termination of Family Partnership's Charter. To inform ASD's decision, please review the issues identified below and provide answers to ASD's questions within 10 business days of the date of this letter.

### II. LAW APPLICABLE TO FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

Alaska law makes Family Partnership an ASD school.<sup>1</sup> The APC selects its principal, who in turn selects, appoints and supervises employees of the charter school, including teachers and deans of students.<sup>2</sup> Family Partnership is permitted to operate only in accordance with its Charter with ASD.<sup>3</sup> Family Partnership's Charter with ASD confirms that ASD may terminate Family Partnership's Charter at any time in the School Board's sole discretion for any reason the School Board determines is sufficient. In pertinent part, the Charter provides as follows:

The District may, in its sole discretion, terminate this Contract for Charter School's failure to meet educational achievement goals or fiscal management standards, for a default in any provision of this Contract, or for any other cause. The District shall provide at least 30 days' written notice to Charter School of its intent to terminate this Contract and, if applicable, the reasons for doing so. If Charter School fails to remedy the cause for termination within the time provided in this notice, then this Contract shall automatically terminate at the

<sup>1</sup> AS 14.03.255(a) ("A charter school operates as a school in the local school district . . .").

<sup>2</sup> AS 14.03.255(a).

<sup>3</sup> AS 14.03.255(c).

date stated in the notice. Upon termination, Charter School shall immediately return any unused funds to the District.<sup>4</sup>

The Charter contract further states that Family Partnership “shall comply with all local, state, and federal laws and regulations applicable to public schools in Anchorage, Alaska” and that Family Partnership promised to adhere to all such ASD policies and regulations.<sup>5</sup>

### III. ISSUES

The APC has interfered with Family Partnership Principal Jessica Parker’s hiring of teachers and staff. Specifically, according to the APC’s minutes during the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years,<sup>6</sup> the APC voted to prevent Principal Parker from hiring teachers and a Dean of Students for months. This action is contrary to AS 14.03.255(a) and Article II, Section 1 of Family Partnership’s bylaws, which reflect that the principal, not the APC, is imbued with the authority to select and hire teachers and staff. The APC has exceeded its authority and must immediately provide assurance that it will not interfere, in violation of the Charter, with the principal’s management of the school. Please provide those written assurances in the APC’s response to this demand letter.

During the fall of 2022, ASD was served with a wrongful termination lawsuit captioned *Katrina Zimmerman v. Anchorage School District and Jessica Parker*, 3AN-22-08118CI. In that lawsuit, Katrina Zimmerman, a former sponsored teacher at Family Partnership, seeks monetary damages against ASD and Principal Parker stemming from ASD’s non-retention of Ms. Zimmerman for the 2022-2023 school year. Ms. Zimmerman is married to APC member John Zimmerman. Ms. Zimmerman filed the lawsuit on September 7, 2022. Member Zimmerman failed to disclose the lawsuit to the APC. Without disclosing the lawsuit, Member Zimmerman participated in deliberations and votes culminating in the APC voting that Principal Parker could not hire teachers or a Dean of Students. Once ASD was served with the lawsuit, it was provided to the APC chair who, on September 30, 2022, requested Member Zimmerman voluntarily disclose the lawsuit and recuse himself from APC discussions and votes on Principal Parker’s operation of Family Partnership. Member Zimmerman refused both requests. The APC chair then brought the lawsuit to the attention of the other APC members and advised he would be asking the APC to institute an independent investigation into Member Zimmerman’s non-disclosure of the lawsuit and continued participation in discussions and votes regarding Principal Parker’s operation of Family Partnership.

On October 3, 2022, the APC voted to launch an independent investigation of Member Zimmerman under Article II, Section 10 of its bylaws. The investigation was undertaken by a special committee of five members of the Family Partnership community who were not APC members. ASD’s Director of Charter Schools Jason Hlasny wrote a letter warning the APC to

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<sup>4</sup> Provision 18 (“Termination”) of Charter School Contract between ASD and Family Partnership Charter School.

<sup>5</sup> Provision 1 of the Charter School Contract between ASD and Family Partnership Charter School.

<sup>6</sup> APC Minutes from meetings held on May 9, 2022; August 8, 2022; September 19, 2022; and September 26, 2022.

take seriously its self-regulation of members and to remind the APC that ASD's and the Municipality of Anchorage's conflict of interest rules apply to the APC.

The special committee appointed by the APC issued unanimous findings that Member Zimmerman was conflicted on all issues before the APC:

Special Committee Members have unanimously voted that in regard to all FPCS [Family Partnership Charter School] board issues there is a conflict of interest to have John Zimmerman performing voting duties in regard to all FPCS board issues. The special committee carefully reviewed all information provided from Chris Cvancara and interviewed FPCS board members and believe the conflict of interest existed when the wife of Mr. John Zimmerman filed a lawsuit against Principal Parker on 7 Sep 22.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, at its next meeting, the APC rejected this unanimous finding and instead limited Member Zimmerman's conflict with Principal Parker only to her official annual evaluation. Thus, it appears as of now, Member Zimmerman is deliberating and voting on issues pertaining to Principal Parker's operation of Family Partnership, even though Member Zimmerman's wife has sued Principal Parker in court.

Members of the APC have conducted themselves in an unprofessional manner and often in bad faith. Last school year, an APC member filed a Citizen's Complaint against Principal Parker instead of meeting with her to discuss the non-retention of a sponsored teacher. The official minutes of APC meetings show members regularly accusing each other of violating decorum. In the last month, APC members have filed code of ethics complaints against each other, and filed public records requests. A review of email communications forwarded to the Administration between members show a striking lack of respect between some members, and patronizing and immature language used by others. This unprofessional behavior of the APC is unacceptable. The APC must provide written assurances that it will seek appropriate training on how to conduct business in a professional manner consistent with what is considered best practice for governing boards for non-profit entities.

During Family Partnership's February 10, 2023 APC meeting, Member Worman moved the APC to place Chair Goldade under investigation pursuant to Article II, Section 11 of Family Partnership's bylaws for communicating with ASD and its legal counsel without APC approval. Family Partnership is an ASD school, and its bylaws and Code of Ethics cannot be used to prevent any member of the APC from communicating with ASD. Please provide written assurances that the APC will not undertake any investigation of Member Goldade for his communications with ASD or his requests for assistance from ASD or its legal counsel.

The conflicts and issues outlined above have required an inordinate amount of time from ASD's administrative support team over the past 18 months or more. No other charter school in the District has required so much time of the Administration and School Board. The APC must modify and change its behavior as a professional and functioning Board to resolve disputes at the Board level in order to assure the ASD Administration and School Board that valuable time and resources will not be wasted in the future. Please provide written assurances

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<sup>7</sup> Family Partnership Charter School Special Committee's Decision on Conflict of Interest (Nov. 26, 2022).

regarding how the APC and individual APC members intend to conduct themselves in the future.

These issues are particularly concerning given the APC's history of repeatedly violating its Charter, including during the 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 school years.


#### IV. QUESTIONS AND DEMANDS

To inform ASD's action on Family Partnership's Charter, respond in writing to the following inquiries within 10 business days of the date of this letter.


- 1. Why did the APC interfere with Principal Parker's hiring of teachers and Dean of Students during the spring and fall of 2022?** Please provide written assurances that the APC will cease and desist from further interference with the principal's management of the school.
- 2. Why did APC Meeting Members Worman, Cvancara, Utic, and Caldwell vote against removing Member Zimmerman from the APC even though the special investigative committee appointed by the APC unanimously concluded that Member Zimmerman had a conflict of interest regarding all issues before the APC?** Each of these members independently explain your vote.
- 3. What was Member Worman's basis for moving the APC to place Member Goldade under investigation for communicating with ASD or its legal counsel.** Member Worman please explain the basis. Further, please provide written assurances that the APC will not place Member Goldade under investigation for his communications with and requests to ASD.
- 4. Please explain the affirmative steps the APC will take to prevent its members from engaging in the unprofessional and bad-faith behavior outlined above and the metrics the APC intends to use to demonstrate sufficient progress to ASD.** Please provide an explanation of what the APC will do to conduct its business in a professional manner consistent with best practice for non-profit boards of directors.
- 5. If any member of the APC believes that Principal Parker's management of Family Partnership to date has harmed Family Partnership, its mission, or charter with ASD, please explain the basis of that belief.**

ASD expects your responses by February 27, 2023.

Sincerely,

  
Dr. Jharrett Bryantt  
Superintendent

Sincerely,

  
Dr. Jason Hlasny  
Director of Charter Schools